The Eternal City

A History of Rome in Maps

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Introduction

Rome as Idea and Reality

“Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past—an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one.”

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1930

Visitors to Rome today usually come to see the city’s ancient and Renaissance landmarks—places like the Forum, the Colosseum, St. Peter’s Basilica, and the Sistine Chapel. But more than its individual sites, what makes Rome as a whole so captivating is its unbroken history—the countless incarnations and eras that merge in the cityscape. No other place can quite match Rome’s resilience, its three-millennium-long series of reinventions.

Anyone looking for the quintessential Roman experience in a single spot would do well to bypass showstoppers like the Pantheon or Trevi Fountain and head instead to San Clemente, a relatively modest church at the foot of the Lateran Hill in the southeastern part of the city. The building that people enter at ground level dates to the twelfth century and is a fine example of medieval Christian architecture (fig. 1). That church, however, is just the tip of the iceberg. From a door inside the gift shop you can descend through archaeological layers, down a staircase to an earlier church from the fourth century, and

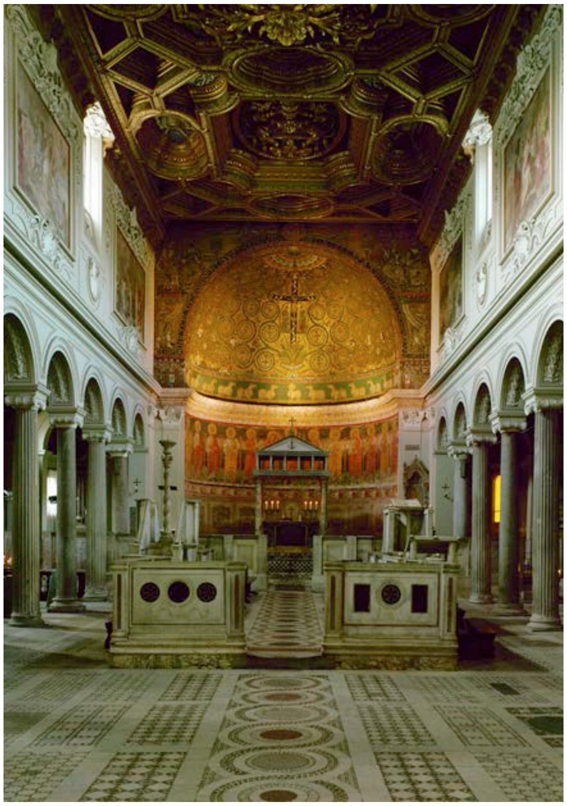


Fig. 1

Basilica of San Clemente, Rome, dedicated 1108. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

beneath that to a second-century pagan temple, as well as previous structures dating to the first century and possibly earlier (fig. 2). The oldest part of the complex is some two thousand years old and sixty feet beneath street level.

When you climb back up to emerge into the hustle and bustle of modern Rome—the trams, taxis, and pedestrian traffic in that busy stretch of the city—you have come full circle, in a disorienting kind of time travel. San Clemente embodies the vertical, chronological layering that is so characteristic of Rome: not one city, but many superimposed and still visible today.

At the same time, Rome is more than brick and mortar. It also exists in the realm of ideas: of history, myth, and symbolism. All these factors are shaped, in turn, by human ones. From gods to caesars, pagans to Christians, popes to prime ministers, and pilgrims to tourists, Rome has been many things to many people. This book considers the city through the eyes of artists and mapmakers who have managed to capture something of its essence over the centuries. For all of them, the key question has been which slice of Rome to show. The dilemma is summed up by the almost hallucinogenic cover to a late twentieth-century book on the city's development (fig. 3), which squeezes 2,700 years of history into a two-dimensional diagram. Aiming to be comprehensive, it becomes overwhelming, like a restaurant menu with too many choices. Or perhaps it is deliberately disorienting, in a tacit acknowledgment of the futility of condensing the multiplicity that is Rome into a single image.

The maps in this book, by contrast, provide the raw material for a selective visual history of not one but ten "Romes," each reflecting a key theme or era. The aim is not to provide an encyclopedic overview of all maps of Rome throughout history, but rather to focus on a judiciously chosen selection that best illuminates key facets of the Eternal City. The chapters are arranged chronologically, while the maps are drawn from across time. Each chapter begins with a historical introduction to set the stage, describing the relevant cultural background that helps us to better understand the maps, which in turn help us to better understand Rome itself. Descriptions and interpretations of the individual maps follow the chapter introductions, each one investigated for all the insights it has to offer.

Collectively, the maps chosen for inclusion in this book introduce us to different cities that flourished on the same site at different times, but always overlapped with or built on previous versions—as, for example, when Fascist-era urban planners looked for inspiration to the ancient city, much as their Renaissance counterparts had done four hundred years earlier. Or, for that matter, when the medieval builders of San Clemente chose to construct a new church on old foundations. Rome, it seems, is always referring back to itself.

The city is and has long been a shape-shifter, its very adaptability allowing it to live on and remain relevant for so long. But to a significant extent Rome's previous lives are always present, never fully wiped away. The images in this book effectively convey that rich existence. Ranging from modest to magnificent, they comprise singular aesthetic monuments like paintings and grand prints as well as more popular and practical items like tourist maps, geological and archaeological surveys, and digitizations. The most iconic, important, and beautiful images of the city appear alongside relatively obscure, unassuming items that have just as much to teach us about the Eternal City.

Legend holds that Rome was founded in 753 BCE by Romulus on the Palatine Hill, the first of the city's famed seven hills—a place where excavations have indeed yielded evidence of modest inhabitation around that time (fig. 4). It is likely that separate settlements popped up on other nearby hilltops around the same time. Yet Rome's advantageous site probably attracted settlement even earlier. Located at a crossroads and in a valley, it was a fertile spot for agriculture, the river and hills provided natural defenses, and the island in the Tiber was a strategic lookout point for monitoring river traffic. That said, the place also had pronounced disadvantages. Prone to flooding, much of it was a marshy plain. Little in Rome's site predicted the great city it was to become.

According to ancient authors, a series of kings ruled the Roman people, who merged over time from several ethnic groups—including Sabines, Latins, and

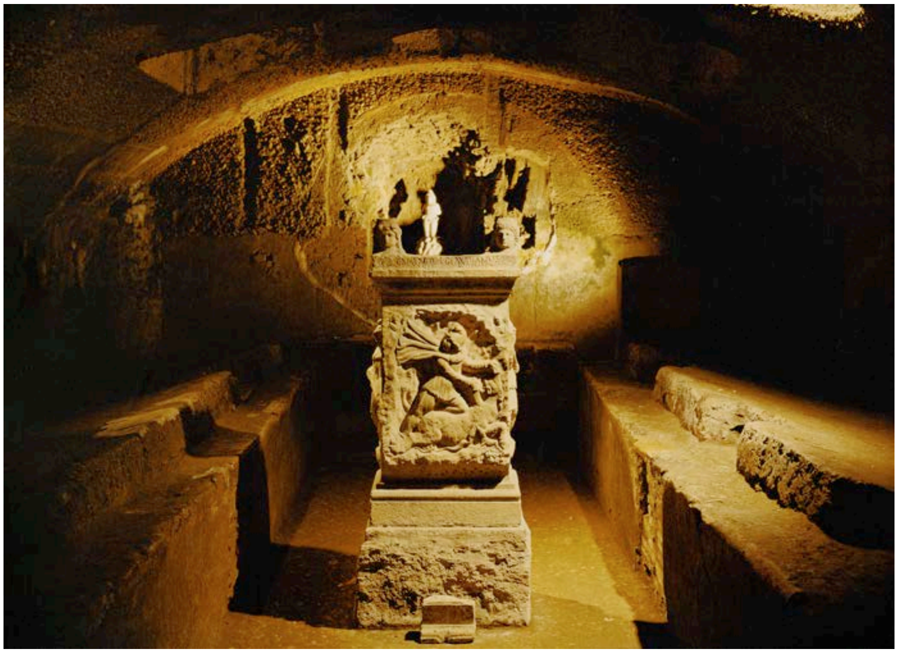


Fig. 2

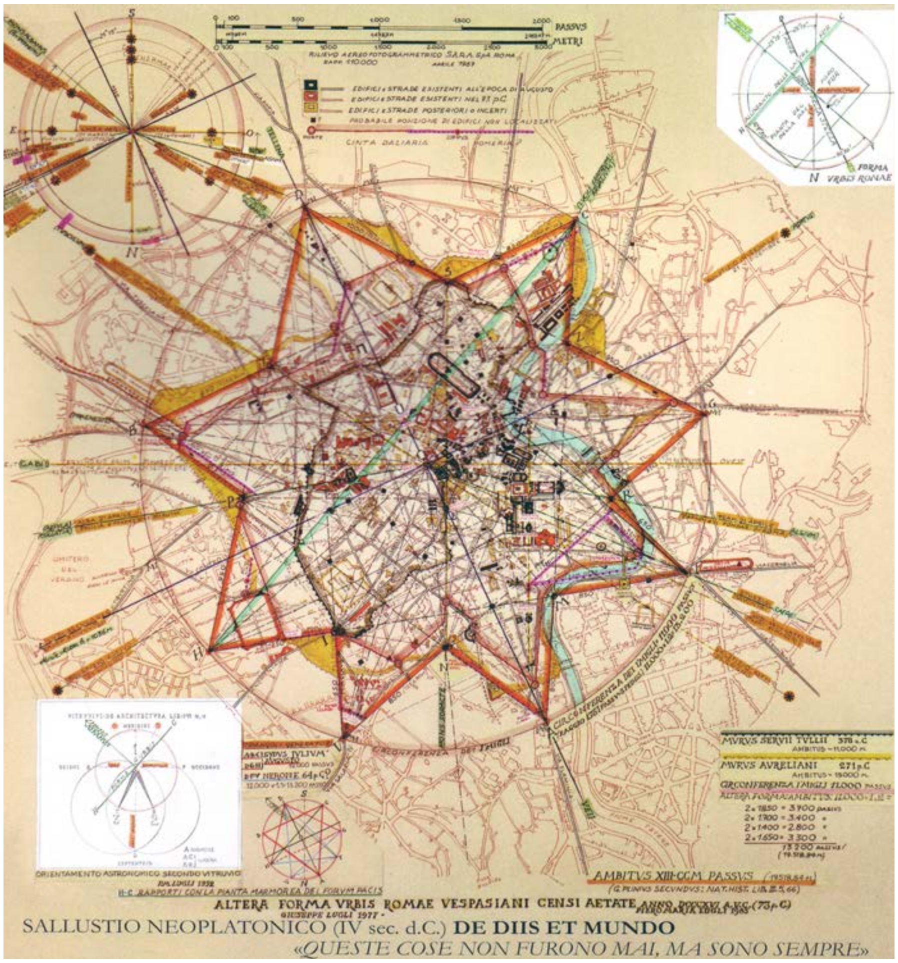
Temple of Mithras in the lower church of San Clemente, Rome, ca. 200 CE. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

Etruscans. The city was a republic from about 500 BCE until the first century BCE, during which time its architecture and infrastructure developed rapidly, as did its power over the surrounding region of Latium, the larger Italian peninsula, and eventually the Mediterranean world. By the time the city became capital of an empire in the first century BCE, it had a population estimated at one to two million inhabitants. Imperial Rome flourished until Constantine left to found a new capital at Constantinople in the early 300s, leaving a power vacuum and sending the city into a tailspin of sacks and foreign invasions lasting several centuries. Rome had become a deeply Christian place, however, with sacred shrines to rival its decaying pagan ones, and the popes—the city's bishops—eventually assumed temporal leadership.

The Middle Ages was a millennium of ups and downs caused by internal power struggles as well as external forces, but on the whole the medieval papacy parlayed the city's prestige as a pilgrimage destination into a new kind of power and influence. The nadir of Rome's fortunes came when the papal court departed for Avignon in the early 1300s, the city's population dropping to less than 20,000. But this moment, too, proved fleeting. With the return of the

Fig. 3

Cover, Piero Maria Lugli, *Urbanistica di Roma: Trenta planimetrie per trenta secoli di storia*. Rome: Bardi Editore, 1998.


MVRVS SERVII TVLLII 378 a.C
MVRVS AVRELIANI 271 p.C
AMBITVS XIII-CCM PASSVS
ORIENTAMENTO ASTRONOMICO SECONDO VITRUVIO
ALTERA FORMA VRBIS ROMAE VESPASIANI CENSI AETATE
SALLUSTIO NEOPLATONICO (IV sec. d.C.) DE DIIS ET MUNDO
«QUESTE COSE NON FURONO MAI, MA SONO SEMPRE»

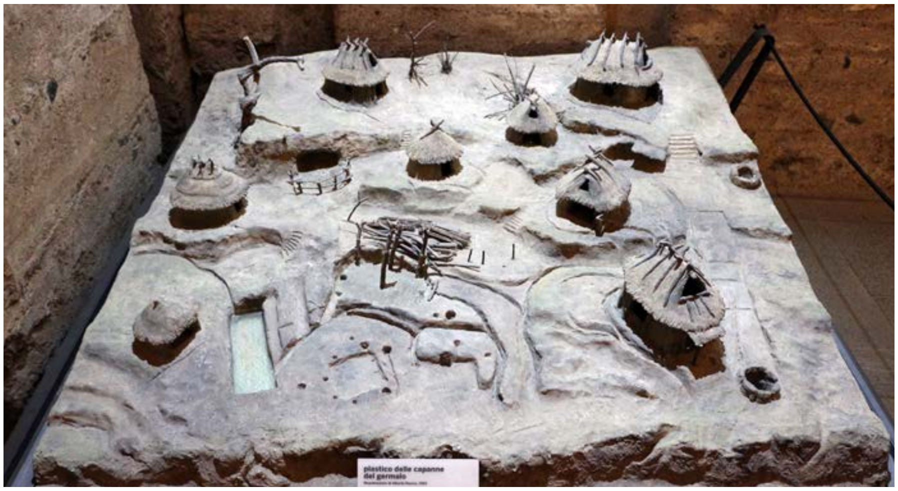


Fig. 4

Model of archaic settlement on the Palatine Hill, Antiquarium del Palatino, Rome. Photo: Sailko / Wikimedia Commons. CC BY 3.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/legalcode.

popes in the 1400s, the city began a lasting resurgence that carried it through centuries of political and religious challenges—the Sack of Rome by imperial troops in 1527, the Protestant Reformation followed by the Church's Counter-Reformation, the propagandistic glory of the Baroque period, and a new urban identity as a tourist destination.

A fresh chapter in Roman history began in 1871, when the city was made capital of united Italy (a time known as *Roma capitale*), and it has since been a Fascist city, a fashion capital, a world heritage site, the home of a dysfunctional government (or a series of them), even a place where avant-garde architecture and design have a home.

One particularly emblematic spot is the modern building designed by Richard Meier to house the Augustan Ara Pacis, or Altar of Peace, constructed 13–9 BCE (fig. 5). Meier's museum, completed in 2006—just over two thousand years after the structure it contains—consists of boxy expanses of concrete, steel, glass, and travertine, the geometry of which echoes the underlying block form of the marble altar itself. However controversial, Meier's building, together with the Augustan monument it houses, is just as much an allegory of Rome as San Clemente. This is a city where change has been the norm for over 2,500 years, where new has responded to old, and where decline has always gone hand in hand with regeneration.

An underlying premise of this book is that by understanding Rome—or trying to—we gain some insight into cities and their patterns in general. It is a cliché to say that we are living in an exceptionally urbanized time. More and more people are concentrated in megacities with populations exceeding ten million—Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, Karachi, Delhi, Nairobi, Lagos, Istanbul, New York, Mexico City, and São Paulo are just some of the places that make the list. Rome will never be as populous as those places, but it is in certain respects the mother of all cities. At various times and for a variety of reasons, other places (Cairo,

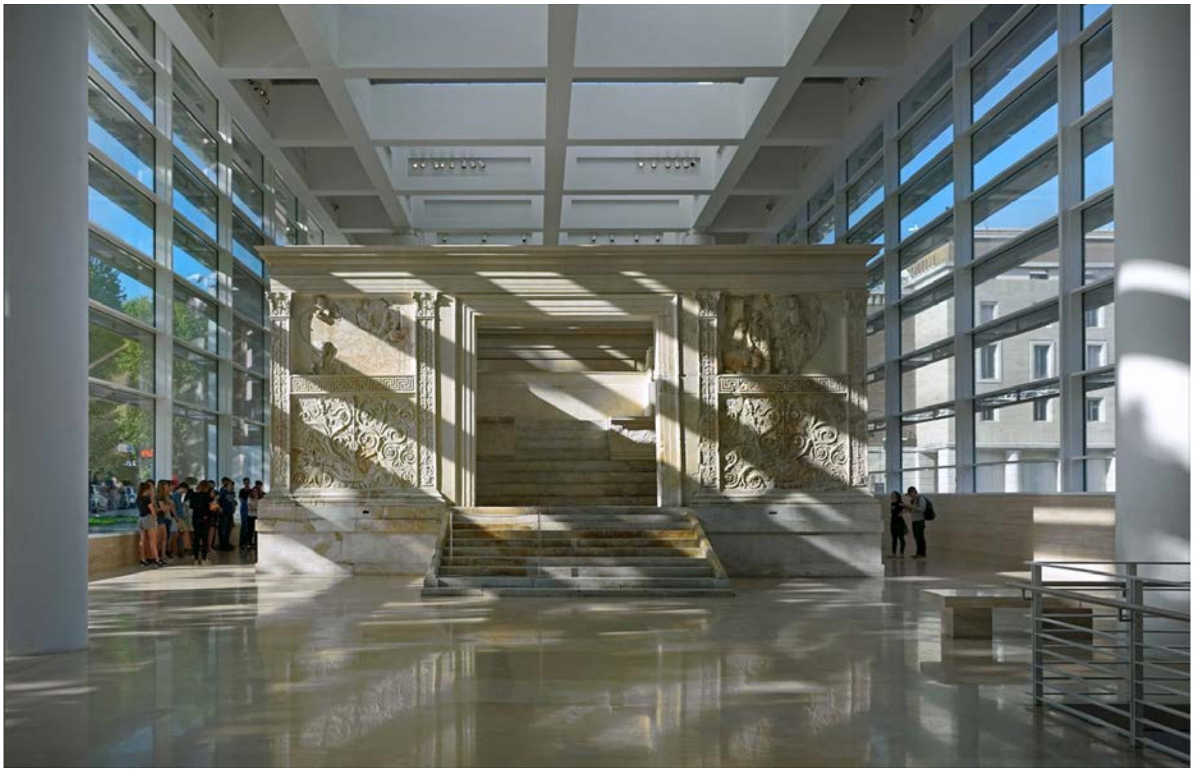


Fig. 5

Richard Meier (architect), Ara Pacis Museum, Rome, 2006. Photo: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra / Wikimedia Commons. CC BY 2.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode.

Prague, Mecca) have laid claim to that title, but none has led such a long and uninterrupted existence, clinging to its influence as tenaciously as Rome.

Along the way, Rome has been defined—paradoxically, perhaps—by its ability to change and adapt to new circumstances. However much it has struggled to enter the modern age with its much vaunted eternity intact, Rome has important lessons to teach us about how cities become, and remain, relevant in the extreme long term. Thanks to its great staying power, Rome is also a model for how we conceptualize urban centers in general—as places defined by natural and manmade elements, but most of all by the human communities that create, inhabit, shape, and reshape them. And Rome's communities have been particularly varied. From the city's earliest days its permanent population has been joined by a shifting group of visitors, be they merchants, pilgrims, clerics, occupying armies, tourists, or diplomats.

The second basic premise of this book has to do with the nature of the material—namely, the maps and views that tell Rome's story. Such works do not necessarily aspire to factual and objective reporting. In our current era of "alternative facts" and "fake news," maps have a lot to teach us. They are necessarily selective, for they must leave out more information than they could ever possibly incorporate. Which features, streets, neighborhoods, landmarks are included—which ones omitted, as if they did not exist? The question of what makes the cut can be highly loaded, revealing tacit approval or censure, moral codes, or social critique. Maps can be actively motivated by an agenda—a way of staking a claim at the expense of competing claims. They can make arguments, advance falsehoods, or spread propaganda. In sum, they have the power to embody ideals and beliefs as well as (or in the face of) concrete reality.

The authoritative multivolume *History of Cartography*, a project in progress since 1987, hints at the wide range of possibilities in its encompassing definition of maps as “graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world.” The spatial component is key, of course, but nothing else is to be taken for granted: not truthfulness, not a focus on physical features, not neutrality. For a place like Rome, where intangible factors like symbolism and memory hold as much weight as physical features, mapping might be the best way to do justice to the city—a strategy for defining the identity of a place that defies definition. Ultimately, that notion lies at the heart of the following ten chapters.

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Chapter One

Rome Takes Shape

“After starting from small and humble beginnings, [Rome] has grown to such dimensions that it begins to be overburdened by its greatness.”

Livy, *History of Rome*, first century BCE

Today’s visitors to Rome pass through but rarely take much note of one of the city’s most impressive and well-preserved ancient monuments: the third-century Aurelian Wall. But would Rome even be Rome without its wall? That question raises a more basic one: What defines a city? Its skyline, its landmarks? Its history, or myths? The character of its inhabitants? The city’s topography, its natural or manmade contours? Our modern notion of urban identity is based on a number of factors, tangible and intangible, but imposed boundary lines do not usually factor high on the list. Barring obvious border markings—such as a river crossing, or a street sign indicating that one is “Entering X” or “Leaving Y”—most urbanites today would struggle to pinpoint the moment when they pass into or out of city limits. Think Las Vegas, Phoenix, or Houston: amorphous cities defined by sprawl, not crisp edges.

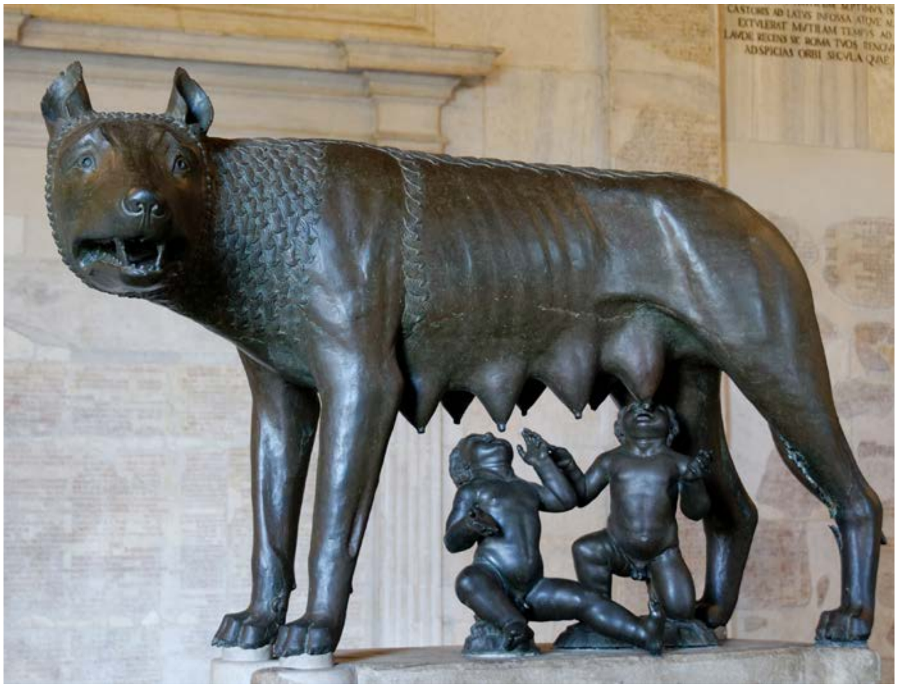
But such fuzzy boundaries are a recent phenomenon. Until just a couple of centuries ago, many cities owed their shape and much of their identity to defensive walls. These ostensibly utilitarian structures were often the most meaningful and prominent urban symbols: nothing less than the threshold between inside and outside, self and other. Over the last couple of centuries, their role has faded. Many historical European cities traded their walled fortifications for ring roads as the era of siege warfare gave way to the era of the automobile—Vienna being perhaps the most famous example. Rome, by contrast, has kept its crisp edges intact for the better part of 1,800 years.

This chapter looks at maps from various eras that shed light on the real and symbolic importance of Rome's walls and that simultaneously allow us to trace the city's early history and growth. The first, done by geologist Giovanni Battista Brocchi in the late nineteenth century, introduces us to Rome's lasting natural features and prehistory: in other words, what was present before there was a *there* there. Paulus Merula's sixteenth-century map, in turn, encapsulates Rome's unfolding development, showing the city's earliest walled enclosure as a hilltop village, its subsequent physical expansion as a republican capital, and its continued evolution as an imperial seat, culminating in the building of the Aurelian Wall, which still defines the core urban form today. The final map, Heinrich Kiepert's nineteenth-century historical reconstruction of Rome's sequence of walled forms, illustrates the administrative districting that further carved up those physical barriers into bureaucratic units (a harbinger of the notorious administrative red tape that still characterizes life in Rome and in Italy generally).

The feature with the most lasting significance, however, is Rome's Aurelian Wall, which has remained a benchmark of the city's rising or falling fortunes for almost two millennia. Much more than just a physical attribute, it is key to Rome's history and image. Even Rome's legendary founding hinges on the laying out of walls. As recounted by a number of ancient writers, including Livy,

Fig. 6

The Capitoline she-wolf. Photo: Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons.



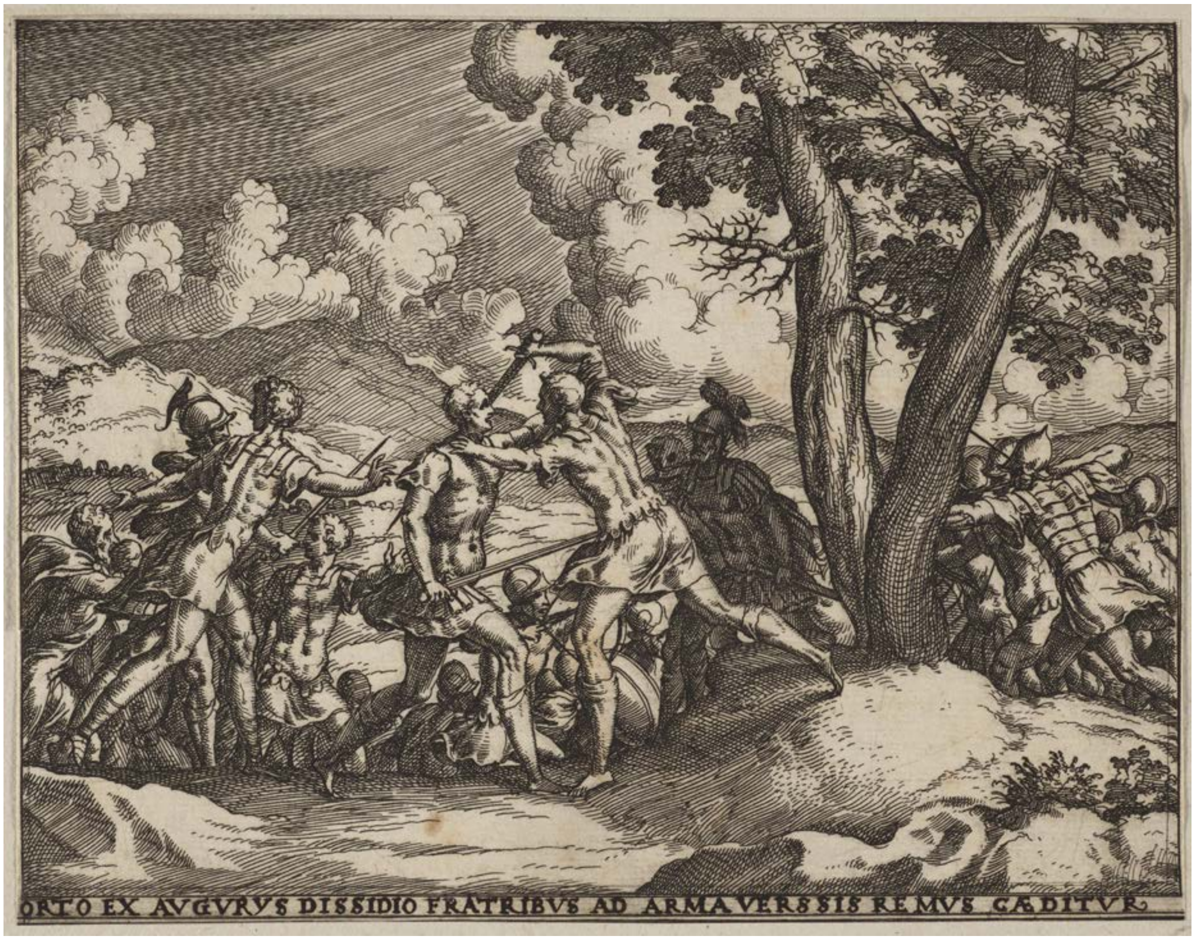

ORTO EX AVGVRYS DISSIDIO FRATRIBVS AD ARMA VERSSIS REMVS CÆDITVR

Fig. 7

Giovanni Battista Fontana, *Romulus Kills Remus*, plate 8, 1575. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Anonymous Fund for the Acquisition of Prints Older than 150 Years. Photo: © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

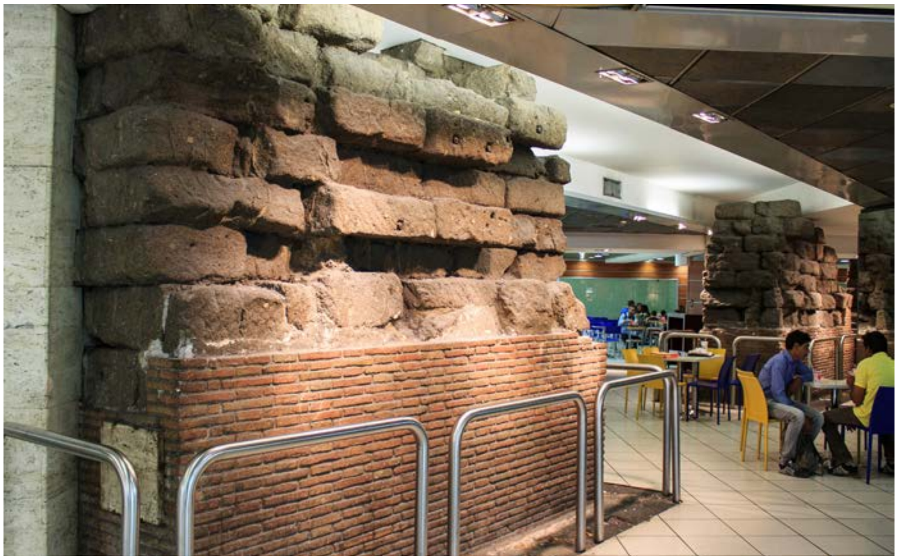
Plutarch, and Varro, the story goes something like this: Rome was established after the fatal conclusion of a feud between Romulus and Remus, twin sons of the god Mars and descendants of Aeneas, the prince of Troy who had fled to ancient Latium following the burning of his city. This duo was a bit like a pagan Cain and Abel. As babies, Romulus and Remus had been abandoned to their fate near the banks of the Tiber. There, a fierce she-wolf discovered, suckled, and protected them until they were taken in by a shepherd and his wife, who raised them as their own (fig. 6).

As young men, the twins decided to establish a new city but argued over where to locate it—Romulus favoring the Palatine, Remus the Aventine. They resolved to settle the matter through augury, a form of prophecy relying on the observation of birds in flight, but quarreled over how to interpret the results. According to Livy's version of the story, tensions mounted until Remus, taunting his brother, leapt over the provisional wall that Romulus had marked out on the Palatine to define his new city. In revenge for that affront, Romulus killed his brother, named the city in his own honor, and made himself its king (fig. 7).

Tradition dates this fateful sequence of events to a single day: April 21, 753 BCE. Whether there is a grain of historical fact at the heart of this fable is

Fig. 8

The Servian Wall in Termini train station, Rome. Photo: Jeff Bondono, www.JeffBondono.com.



the subject of some debate, but there is no denying the crucial role of walls in Rome's mythical origins. When Romulus outlined the path of his enclosure, he created a sacred precinct: one that no man could violate without consequence. The physical form that Romulus was said to have given his new city was rectangular, dubbed by later generations *Roma Quadrata*. Even if no undisputed material evidence of this legendary perimeter has come to light, it has been equated with Rome's earliest identity as an independent city.

Rome's subsequent history can also be tracked with reference to its walls. Livy and others relate that Rome was ruled by kings until 509 BCE, when the citizens rose up to overthrow their rulers and institute a republican form of government. During its first few centuries, the city fused with other hilltop settlements and consolidated its power over the surrounding region of Latium, expanding in terms of population, surface area, and infrastructure. As Rome outgrew its epicenter on the Palatine, it also outgrew its original wall.

Rome's second, larger defensive circuit, the so-called Servian Wall, dates to the fourth century BCE, although its name and possibly its original outline derive from the time of King Servius Tullius in the 500s BCE. According to Livy, the Servian Wall was built in the wake of Rome's brutal sack by the Gauls in 390 BCE—an event that made it all too clear that the city was vulnerable to foreign incursion. Constructed out of local *tufo* (or tuff, a strong but lightweight volcanic stone, easy to quarry and widely used in Roman building projects), its circuit spanned almost seven miles, enfolding all of the seven hills. Unlike Romulus's wall, which has left scant if any traces in the modern city, we are on solid archaeological footing with the Servian Wall, impressive tracts of which still exist in Rome's eastern and southern zones. Remarkably, one section can be seen inside the McDonald's at Termini train station, in a surreal fusion of ancient stone and modern fast food (fig. 8).

Another half millennium would elapse before the construction of Rome's third and final city wall. Over that time, the city changed a great deal. Already by the third century BCE, Rome was capital of a republic that dominated the Italian peninsula and was expanding its territorial holdings throughout the Mediterranean. When Julius Caesar initiated the empire two hundred years later, Rome was the largest city in the world, highly organized and functional, with a population of more than one million.

Augustus, who ruled from 27 BCE until his death in 14 CE, famously claimed he had found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble. During his long, stable rule, the city gained a glittering monumentality to match its international stature. Traces of that golden age still exist in monuments like the Ara Pacis and Mausoleum of Augustus, as well as in many of the obelisks that dot the city, which the emperor looted from Egypt to adorn his capital. Conspicuously absent among Augustus's many urban embellishments is a new and improved wall. The Servian circuit was becoming a relic of a previous age, having long ago lost its usefulness as a nominal boundary. Since its construction, the city had overrun both sides of the Tiber, and its population had increased more than twenty-five-fold. Despite this rampant growth, the Servian Wall was not replaced until the waning years of the empire in the late third century.

Why? In short, a city that needed walls was vulnerable. For centuries, Rome's security had been ensured not by any tangible defensive structure but rather by the vast, buffering limits of its own empire. Insulated by its territorial holdings and watched over by its formidable army, Rome was stable, thriving, and impervious. Who needed walls? Only when infighting and external threats seemed poised to end the longstanding Pax Romana (or Roman peace) did new defenses become necessary.

Built by Emperor Aurelian in the 270s and significantly raised by Honorius in the early 400s, Rome's third and final wall is a formidable chain of brick-faced

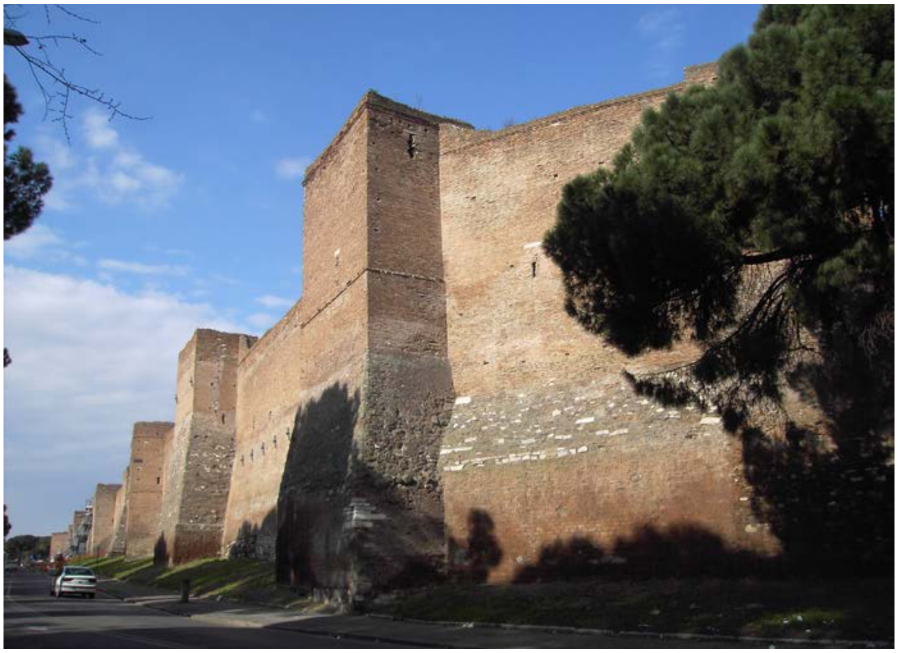
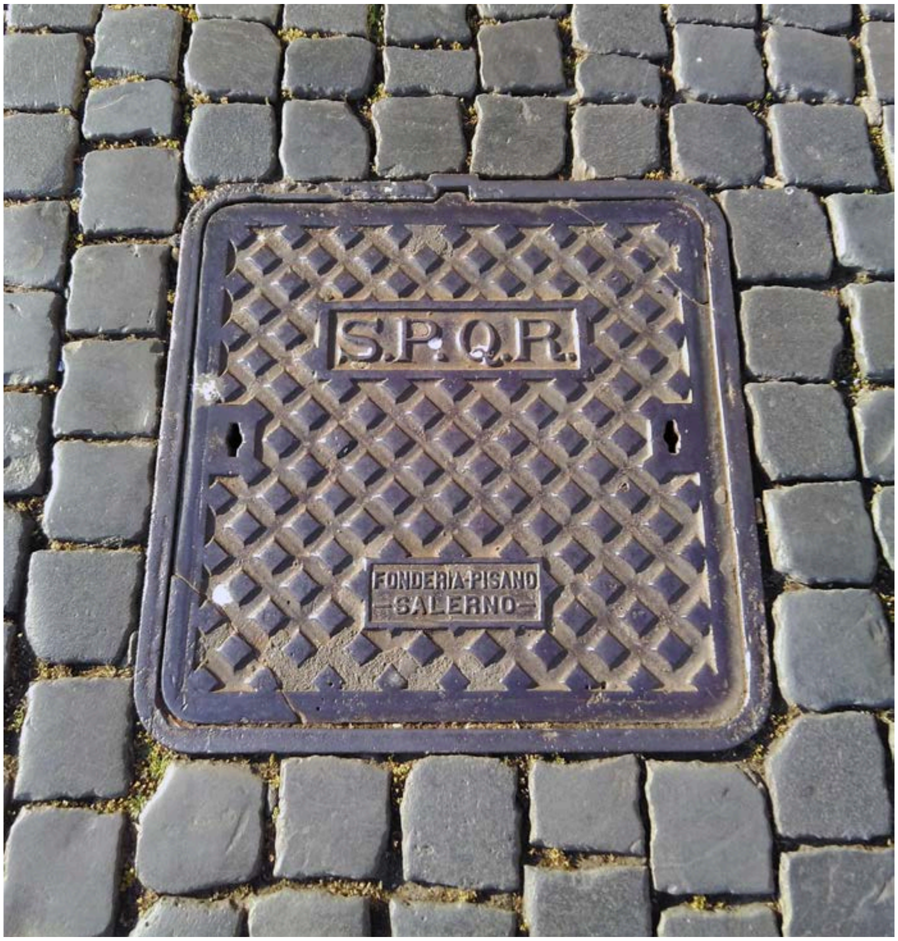


Fig. 9

The Aurelian Wall near Porta San Sebastiano, Rome. Photo: Lalupa / Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 10

Typical Roman manhole cover. Photo: DeveshT / Wikimedia Commons. CC0 1.0: https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/legalcode.



concrete curtain punctuated by city gates and watch towers, which runs an eleven-mile circuit and reaches a height of some fifty feet (fig. 9). Paradoxically, Aurelian's wall was not a sign of strength but of weakness, built because Rome had become susceptible to invasion by barbarians from the north.

Another threat was internal. The emperor had just quashed a rebellion among a large swath of city workers, and he might have hoped that a massive building project such as a defensive wall would help to employ and placate the masses, while also serving as a show of force to all classes of potentially unruly citizens. On a symbolic level, as a sign of imperial power, Aurelian's wall faced inward as well as outward—for it cast its long shadow on restive Romans and outsiders alike.

Whatever the initial reasons for its construction, Rome's wall has lived an exceptionally long life, but it has hardly remained the same. Some changes have been major—such as the building of the Leonine Wall around the papal enclave in the Vatican during the ninth century—but countless other incremental interventions were necessary to keep the Aurelian Wall standing. Over time, it has been damaged, repaired, expanded, or added to in spots, and updated here and there in response to changing military technology, but like the city itself, it has withstood the test of time. In fact, the Aurelian Wall has been one of the few constants in a place defined by flux. The unceasing attention and upkeep it has demanded and received stands as a barometer to the status of Rome itself: the city as an ongoing process.

During the Middle Ages, the city shrank away from the Aurelian circuit, then, in modern times, burst out of it—outgrowing the wall so dramatically that it no longer demarcates Rome from non-Rome as it once did. The wall is also more permeable than it was in the past, and certainly does not serve its original defensive purpose, but its form remains a signature Roman imprint. Like the omnipresent "SPQR" that stands for "Senatus populusque Romanus" (The Senate and People of Rome)—an inscription that adorns Roman manholes, lampposts, and fountains to this day, but has not really been relevant since the end of the Republic in the first century BCE (fig. 10)—the wall has been repurposed as an emblem of the Eternal City.

Rome before Rome

Published in 1820 as part of a larger volume on the city's underlying terrain and geology, Giovanni Battista Brocchi's map (fig. 11) depicts Rome's very ground and topography as it was "in the early days of the city's foundation." Brocchi was attempting a pioneering *geoarchaeological* study: a reconstruction of Rome's surface features (altitudes, plains, marshes, slopes, etc.) at the time of its mythical origins in the eighth century BCE. Using the highly accurate measurements executed by Giovanni Battista Nolli for his plan of 1748 as a point of departure, Brocchi then extrapolated backward in time by incorporating his own geological samples and observations on what lay beneath Rome's accumulated layers.

Why were such calculations even necessary? We tend to think of natural features like hills and valleys as being relatively immutable—or only changing in "geological" time, over hundreds of thousands, even millions of years—but in fact Rome's ground level has risen considerably in less than three millennia, in some places by dozens of feet. This dramatic change is due to a combination of natural phenomena, like silting and erosion, and manmade factors, like the Roman habit of building new constructions on top of earlier ones, or creating huge trash heaps—like Monte Testaccio, a mountain of discarded amphorae (oil jars)—that eventually became lasting parts of the urban topography. Brocchi's image depicts the physical setting for the city's long history of human settlement, but even that setting was not fixed, for it evolved considerably over the centuries.

That said, Brocchi's image neatly encapsulates Rome on the verge of becoming itself. Before there was a city called Rome, there was a place: a stage waiting for its actors and script. Books have been written on this locale, as if to make sense of how such an unremarkable site could give rise to such a remarkable history. At its heart is a bend in the Tiber River, a serpentine curve, at the hinge of which the river widens, making room for a small island believed to have been the city's first site of human habitation. Nestled within the northern loop of the

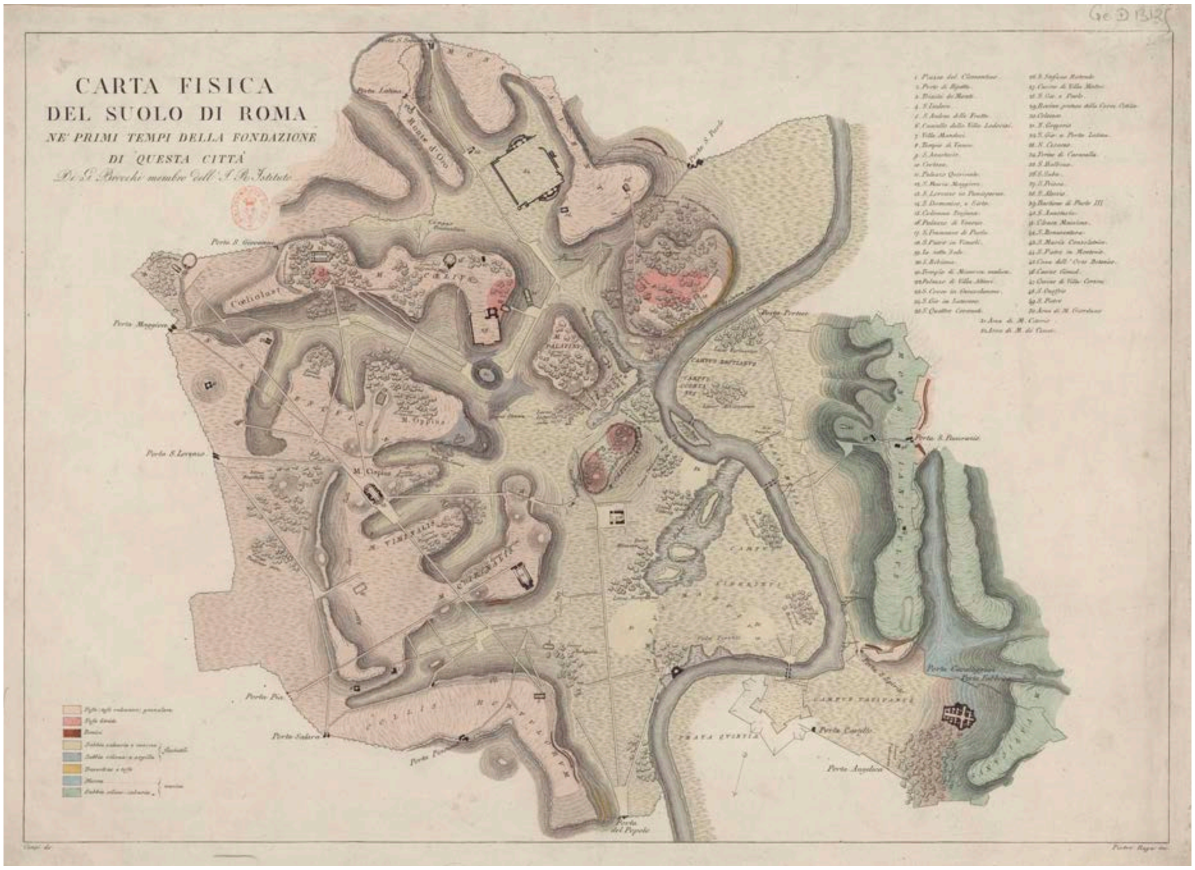


Fig. 11

Giovanni Battista Brocchi, *Carta fisica del suolo di Roma ne' primi tempi della fondazione di questa città*, Rome, 1820. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Tiber's curve is a low-lying floodplain, which later became known as the Campus Martius—Campo Marzio in Italian, or Field of Mars. This zone appears toward the bottom of Brocchi's map, oriented as it is with north at the bottom. Above it, on the other side of the river, the southern loop contains the zone that would later become known as Transtiberim (literally, "across the Tiber"; today's bustling Trastevere).

Radiating out from the river are Rome's hills. Most of those on the east side of the Tiber—at left in Brocchi's map—originated as one large plateau perched above the river valley, which over time eroded into separate ridges. Among them are the relatively small but steep hills later known as the Palatine and Capitoline, which lie right next to each other and very close to the turn in the river's curves, above its left bank, not far from the Tiber Island. Separated by a valley, these hills became the core of the ancient city. South of them, equally close to the river, is the larger Aventine, another site of early settlement. Further from the river, to the northeast (lower left on Brocchi's map), sprawls another trio of hills made up of the Quirinal and the Esquiline with the smaller Viminal perched between them. Above this trio, just southeast of the Palatine, is the Caelian. This array became the seven original hills of the city.

Rome eventually came to enfold several more hills that lay further from the Tiber, and these too appear on Brocchi's map. At lower left is the Pincian, which Brocchi calls “Collis Hortulorum” (Hill of Gardens), as it was known in antiquity. On the right bank of the Tiber, two additional hills bracket the map: the Vatican below and the taller, expansive Janiculum ridge running north-south above.

For anyone who knows Rome even a little bit, it is all but impossible to look at a blank stage like Brocchi’s without mentally filling in the later additions. The Pincian Hill is the site of today’s Villa Borghese park; the Vatican, world capital of Catholicism; the valley between the Capitoline, Palatine, and Esquiline, home to the Roman Forum; and so on. If you look closely at Brocchi’s map, you will see that he too could not resist the impulse to insert later history, for he portrays a handful of Renaissance streets and landmarks, ancient monuments, and churches from the Middle Ages on (fig. 12). There are also later, manmade topographical features—such as the “Agger Servii Tulli” at lower left, which were embankments created for the Servian Wall in the fourth century BCE—surface elements decidedly not present at the time of the city’s legendary founding.

Most notably, the map employs the Aurelian Wall as a framing device, using it to hem in the whole image, thereby defining Rome’s artificial boundary as if it had been there all along: Rome’s version of Manifest Destiny. Brocchi clearly included the wall, like the other anachronistic features, as a key reference point. After all, without its distinctive enclosure, the map could almost be mistaken for any arbitrary assemblage of hills, plains, and river. The lightly outlined

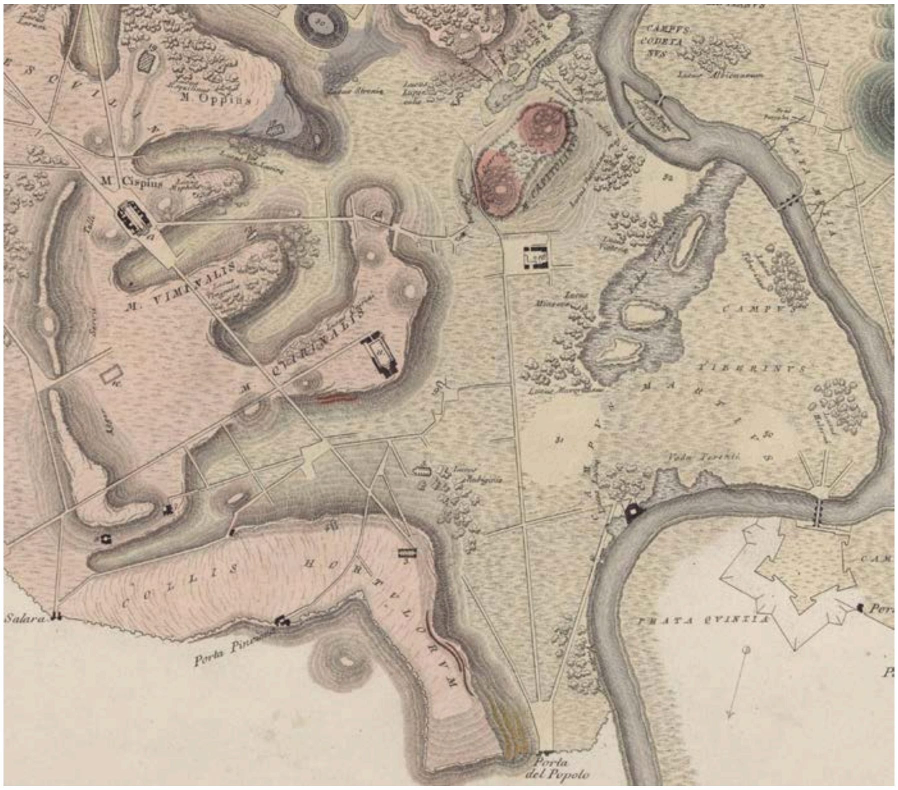


Fig. 12

Brocchi, *Carta fisica*, detail showing Renaissance streets radiating from Piazza del Popolo at the lower margin; Santa Maria Maggiore in the upper left quadrant; the Colosseum toward the top; and the sixteenth-century bastions of Castel Sant’Angelo at lower right

presence of the Aurelian Wall signals that this is not just a random slice of topography: it is Rome.

A Walled City

This modest map (fig. 13) from the late 1500s captures, in miniature, the central role walls have played in Rome's history from the time of the city's fabled origins. Designed by Dutch geographer Paulus Merula and based, in part, on an earlier map by the antiquarian Pirro Ligorio, the map differentiates layers of Roman history by nesting one inside the other. The city's chronological existence radiates out from the center, with succeeding eras signaled by concentric sets of walls. Merula strips most other elements away—there is scant topography, few streets, and just a selection of monuments—so that the city's long existence is told almost solely through horizontal walled expansion.

The map is also an exercise in ingenious, more-or-less informed speculation. Because Merula made his map during the Renaissance, he was operating at a distance of many centuries—even millennia—from the time span he purported to depict. In his day, scholars were fixated on antiquity in general and on Rome's ancient cityscape in particular, but the modern science of archaeology was in its infancy, and evidence was often lacking. Where physical traces such as ruins were not available to study, scholars could sometimes consult classical literary references to help them figure out what was where, when. Failing that, they had no choice but to rely on their own imaginations to make mapped reconstructions of the city as it had supposedly appeared in the distant past. This scholarly and creative challenge, at once frustrating and stimulating, is discussed further in chapter 5.

Merula's map, meanwhile, embodies both the pitfalls and possibilities of a creative approach. The image is oriented with north at left—the most commonly seen orientation in maps of Rome before north became the gold standard for cartography in the eighteenth century. At the map's core is a rectangular circuit that denotes Rome's earliest form. Because there were no known remains of Romulus's wall, Merula and others struggled to reconstruct its form and extent. All they had to go on were vague references in ancient texts. In a sense, the scarcity of concrete data left room for their imagination to intervene.

Merula's vision of Romulus's city is a bit more substantial than most. Where most later archaeological plans depict *Roma Quadrata* corresponding to the crest of the Palatine, Merula shows the walls encircling its base, creeping down to enfold the valley just to the south—which separated Romulus's settlement from the Aventine and later housed the Circus Maximus, Rome's largest mass entertainment venue—as well as part of the plain that would become the Roman Forum to the north.

Fewer relics of the Servian Wall were known in the Renaissance than today, but Merula was familiar with some material traces of it. He depicts Rome's second wall as a rounded form billowing out from the earlier core. Here, too, he diverges from what would later become conventional wisdom. He smooths the wall out considerably, so it is far from the zigzagging oblong shape that archaeologists now believe to have existed. He also does not depict it as a closed circuit occupying the west side of the Tiber, but rather as an open loop terminating at two distant points along the river. It is unclear whether he meant to depict the wall as being closed in on its fourth side by the Tiber itself, or by another section of wall he represents on the other side of the river, enfolding a large section of Trastevere. There was known to have been an extension to the Servian Wall built on that side of the Tiber, but the stretch Merula depicts corresponds to Aurelian's later circuit. Overall, then, Merula betrays a bit of confusion, fudging the evidence a bit, which is only natural given the information at his disposal.

Finally, Merula does not show the Servian Wall enfolding all seven of Rome's original hills. Large stretches of the Viminal and Esquiline lie outside the walled perimeter, as do some ancient monuments, like the Baths of Diocletian, that probably were constructed within its precincts (albeit much later: a peculiarity of Merula's map is that it conflates eras of history, so that monuments appear together that never coexisted). As if in compensation, he shows other monuments

Fig. 13

Paulus Merula, *Descriptio urbis Romae quadratae et postea . . .*, engraving, Rome, ca. 1594. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

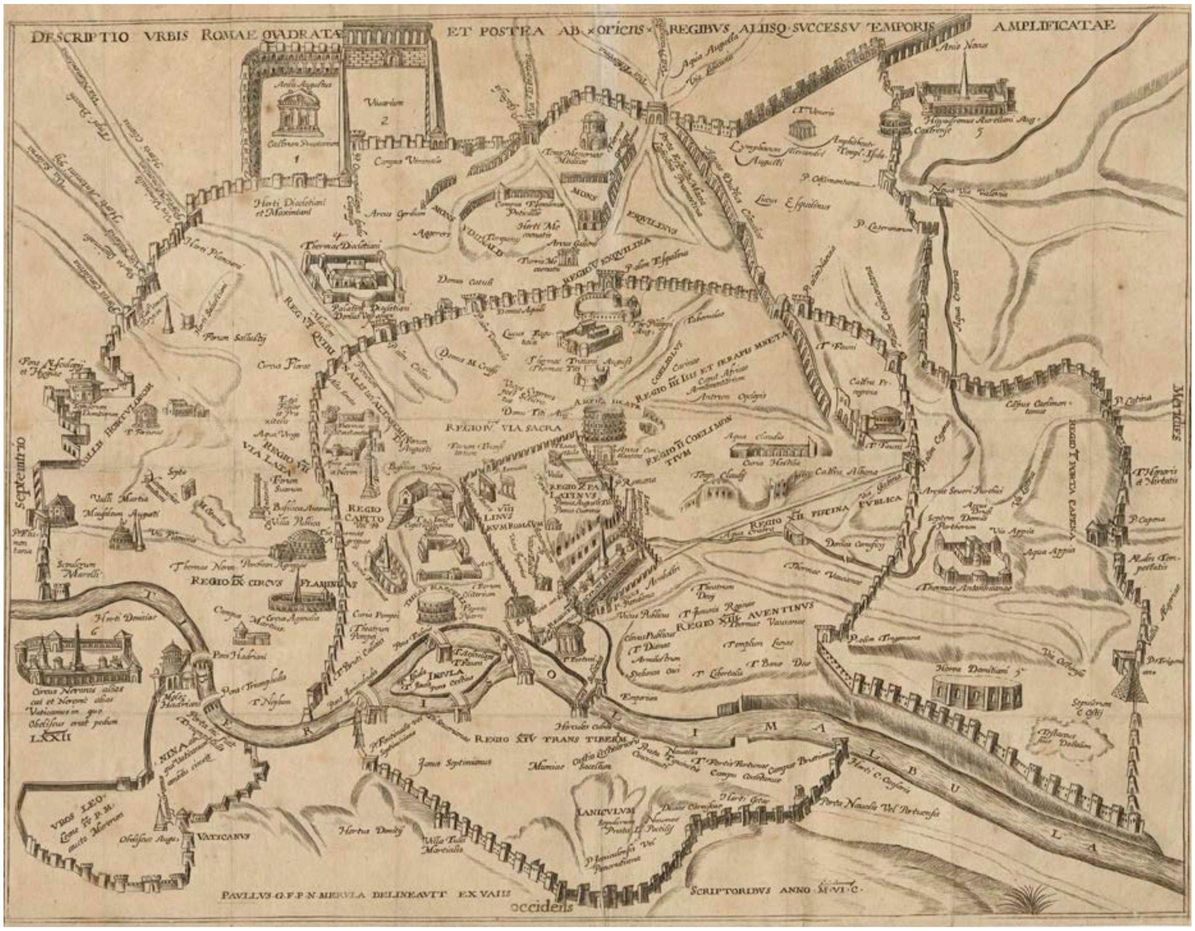

DESCRIPTIO VRBIS ROMAE QVADRATAE ET POSTEA AB oriens REGIBVS ALIISQ SVCCESSV TEMPORIS AMPLIFICATAE
Septentrio
Meridies
occidens
REGIO V ESQVILINA
REGIO IIII VIA SACRA
REGIO IX CIRCVS FLAMINIVS
REGIO XIII AVENTINVS
REGIO XIV TRANS TIBERIM
REGIO XII PISCINA PVBLICA
REGIO VIII FORVM ROMANVM
REGIO X PALATIVM
REGIO II COELIMONTIVM
REGIO III ISIS ET SERAPIS
Thermae Diocletiani
VATICANVS
IANICVLVM
INSVLA
PAVLLVS G F P N MERVLA DELINEAVIT EX VARIIS SCRIPTORIBVS ANNO M·VI·C·

Fig. 14

Heinrich Kiepert, *Roma urbs*, from *Atlas antiquus: Twelve Maps of the Ancient World for Schools and Colleges* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1876). David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com.

lying inside the Servian Wall that were, in fact, outside of it, such as the Theater of Pompey—again, a later structure, but one with a securely known location.

On Merula's map, the Aurelian circuit defines the outer limit of the city's ancient growth. By his time, even this "new" wall was 1,300 years old (and Rome had actually *shrunk* considerably in the intervening centuries). Merula also added the fortified spur encircling the Vatican, constructed in the ninth century by Pope Leo IV, at lower left—although within its precincts, curiously, there is no sign of St. Peter's, which was the whole motivation behind Leo's defenses. Other than that addition to the Aurelian Wall, none of the circuits Merula represents had ever stood side by side in quite this way. It is a timeless Rome, where everything is present simultaneously.

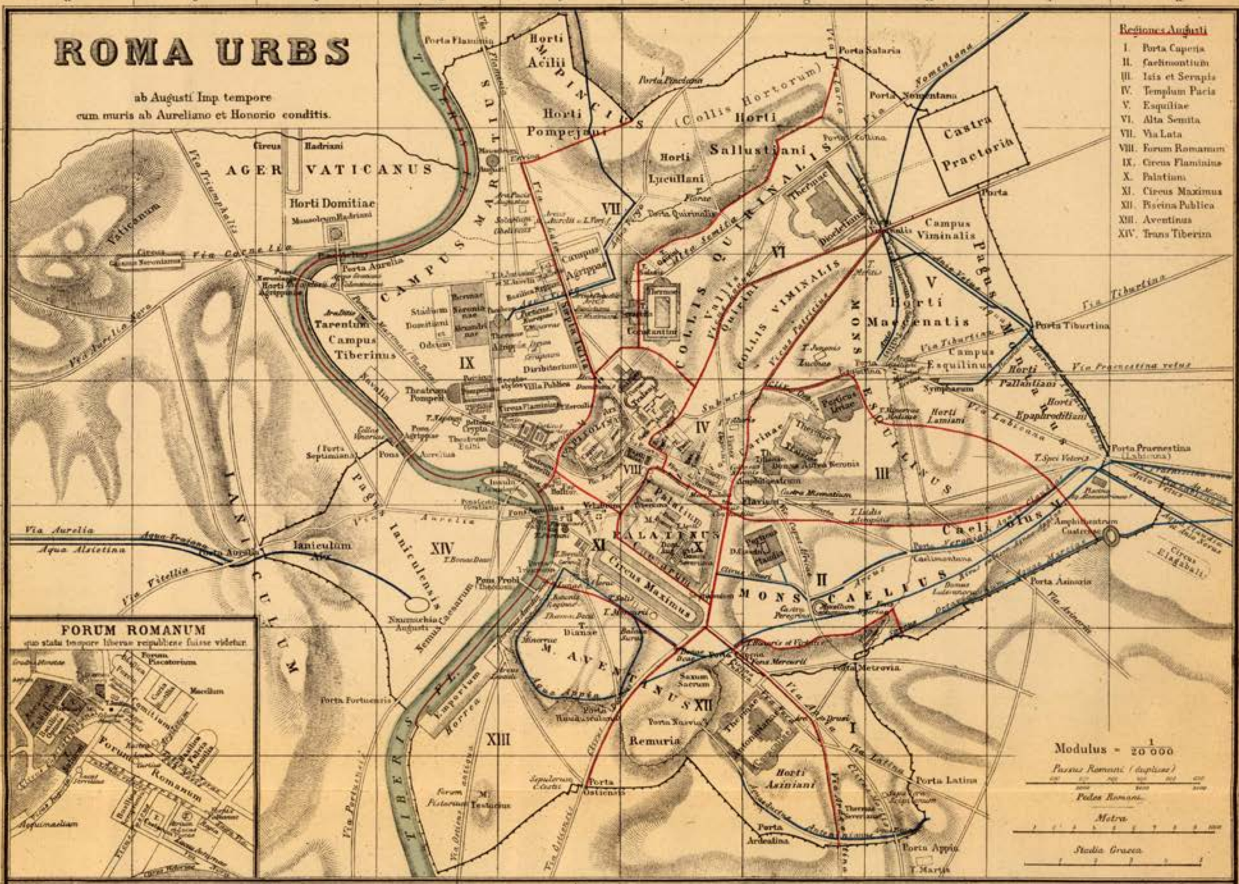
Merula compresses an amazing amount of urban history into a small, two-dimensional space: just nine by twelve inches. Clearly, the image was meant as a radically abridged version of Rome's development for scholarly viewers who were "in the know"—able to fill in the gaps with considerable outside knowledge. It was not a map for the uninitiated.

Urban Districting

Intended for students, this late nineteenth-century map (fig. 14) presents a clear and straightforward glimpse of Rome's development through subsequent walled stages. Although somewhat dated by the standards of twenty-first-century archaeological knowledge and digital approaches (see, for example, mappingrome.com in chapter 2), it shows how far mapping methods had advanced in the three centuries since Merula. Even if it is inaccurate with regard to some of the details, it effectively conveys how the city was increasingly sliced up into boundaries, visible and invisible, over the course of its early history. In this sense, it is a vivid illustration of the principle that urban development entails an increasingly complex web of bureaucratic as well as physical structures.

Like Merula, Kiepert was a classical scholar: an important pioneer in the field of historical geography. This map comes from his instructional *Atlas Antiquus: Twelve Maps of the Ancient World for Schools and Colleges*. Published in Berlin in 1876, it was the English translation of a work that had first appeared in German in 1854 and would later also be issued by Rand McNally in Chicago. There were more sophisticated archaeological reconstructions circulating in Kiepert's time, such as the one by Luigi Canina (see chapter 2), but those were more geared toward expert audiences. This map is noteworthy because it shaped popular conceptions of Rome's early urban history via its wide use in educational contexts.

Three maps in one, the image separates different stages of Rome's mural and geographical development into adjoining quadrants that together picture the city's growth over time. At lower right is Rome during the time of Romulus, with *Roma Quadrata* outlined in green on the Palatine and the Servian Wall surrounding it in a salmon-pink (fig. 15). Less speculative than Merula's map, Kiepert's still shows the urge to complete fragmentary remains by



ROMA URBS

ab Augusti Imp. tempore
cum muris ab Aureliano et Honorio conditis.

Regiones Augusti

- I. Porta Capena
- II. Caelimontium
- III. Isis et Serapis
- IV. Templum Pacis
- V. Esquiliae
- VI. Alta Semita
- VII. Via Lata
- VIII. Forum Romanum
- IX. Circus Flaminius
- X. Palatium
- XI. Circus Maximus
- XII. Piscina Publica
- XIII. Aventinus
- XIV. Trans Tiberim

Modulus = $\frac{1}{20\,000}$

Passus Romani (duplices)

Pedes Romani

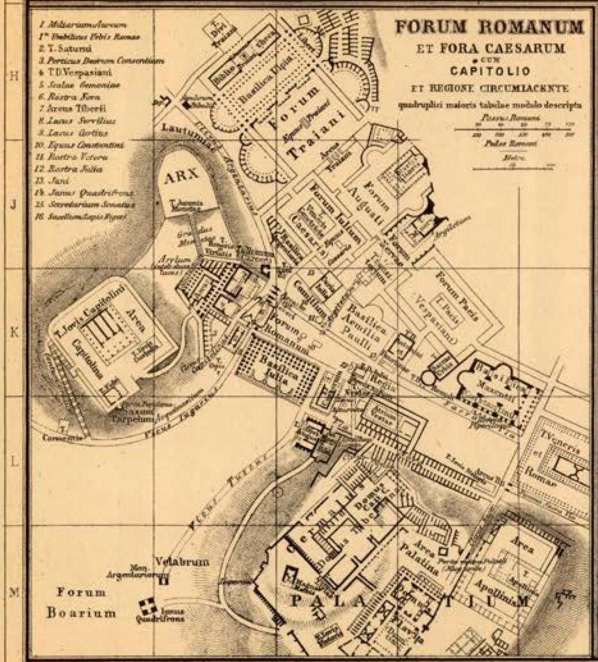
Metra

Stadia Graeca

FORUM ROMANUM

quo statu tempore liberae reipublicae fuisse videtur.

AGER VATICANUS
Horti Domitiae
Mausoleum Hadriani
Circus Neronianus
Via Cornelia
Via Triumphalis
Vaticanum
Via Aurelia
Aqua Alsietina
Aqua Traiana
Porta Aurelia
Via Vitellia
IANICULUM
Ianiculum Arx
Pagus Ianiculensis
XIV
Naumachia Augusti
Porta Portuensis
Via Portuensis
TIBERIS FL.
Porta Flaminia
Horti Acilii
M. PINCIUS
Porta Pinciana
Horti Pompejani
CAMPUS MARTIUS
Tarentum
Campus Tiberinus
Stadium
Odeum
Thermae Neronianae
Pantheon
Thermae Agrippae
Campus Agrippae
IX
Diribitorium
Saepta
Villa Publica
Theatrum Pompeii
Circus Flaminius
Theatrum Marcelli
Collis Hortorum
Horti Sallustiani
Horti Lucullani
Porta Salaria
Porta Nomentana
Via Salaria
Via Nomentana
Castra Praetoria
Porta Collina
COLLIS QUIRINALIS
Alta Semita
Thermae Diocletiani
Campus Viminalis
VI
VII
COLLIS VIMINALIS
Vicus Patricius
MONS
Horti Maecenatis
Campus Esquilinus
Porta Tiburtina
Via Tiburtina
Via Praenestina vetus
Horti Pallantiani
Horti Epaphroditiani
Horti Lamiani
Porta Praenestina (Labicana)
Via Labicana
V
IV
III
VIII
Thermae Traiani
Thermae Titi
Domus Aurea Neronis
Amphitheatrum
Subura
Carinae
Forum Traiani
PALATIUM
X
XI
Circus Maximus
M. AVENTINUS
XII
XIII
Emporium
Horrea
Mons Testaceus
Porta Ostiensis
Via Ostiensis
Porta Trigemina
Saxum Sacrum
Remuria
I
Porta Capena
Horti Asiniani
Thermae Severianae
Porta Latina
Via Latina
Porta Appia
Via Appia
Porta Ardeatina
MONS CAELIUS
Amphitheatrum Castrense
Circus Elagabali
Porta Asinaria
Via Asinaria
II
Forum Piscatorium
Macellum
Comitium
Forum Romanum
Aequimaelium



FORUM ROMANUM

ET FORA CAESARUM
CUM
CAPITOLIO
ET REGIONE CIRCUMIACENTE
quadruplici maioris tabulae modulo descripta

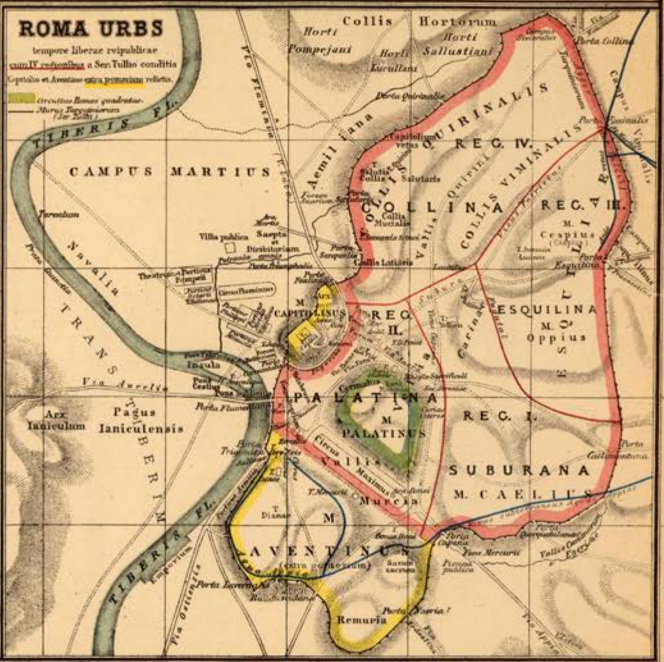
Passus Romani

Pedes Romani

Metra

1. Miliarium Aureum
1ª Umbilicus Urbis Romae
2. T. Saturni
3. Porticus Deorum Consentium
4. T.D. Vespasiani
5. Scalae Gemoniae
6. Rostra Nova
7. Arcus Tiberii
8. Lacus Servilius
9. Lacus Curtius
10. Equus Constantini
11. Rostra Vetera
12. Rostra Julia
13. Jani
14. Janus Quadrifrons
15. Secretarium Senatus
16. Sacellum Lapis Nigri

ARX
T. Junonis Monetae
Lautumiae
Asylum
T. Jovis Capitolini
Area Capitolina
Carcer
Forum Traiani
Basilica Ulpia
Bibliotheca
Forum Augusti
Forum Julium
Forum Pacis
Forum Romanum
Basilica Aemilia
Basilica Julia
T. Veneris et Romae
PALATIUM
Area Palatina
Apollinis
Velabrum
Forum Boarium
Janus Quadrifrons



ROMA URBS

tempore liberae reipublicae
cum IV regionibus a Ser. Tullio conditis
Capitolio et Aventino extra pomoerium relictis.

🟩 Circuitus Romae quadratae.

— Murus Tarquiniorum (Ser. Tullii)

Collis Hortorum
Horti Pompejani
Horti Lucullani
Horti Sallustiani
Porta Collina
Porta Quirinalis
CAMPUS MARTIUS
TIBERIS FL.
Tarentum
Villa publica
Saepta
Diribitorium
Circus Flaminius
Theatrum Pompeii
Navalia
TRANS TIBERIM
Arx Ianiculum
Pagus Ianiculensis
Via Aurelia
Insula
REG. IV.
QUIRINALIS
COLLINA
VIMINALIS
REG. VII.
M. Cespius
ESQUILINA
M. Oppius
REG. II.
CAPITOLIUM
PALATINA
M. PALATINUS
REG. I.
SUBURANA
M. CAELIUS
Vallis Murcia
AVENTINUS
Remuria
Porta Capena
Via Ostiensis

Geographische Verlagshandlung
Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen) Berlin
Wilhelmstr. 29.

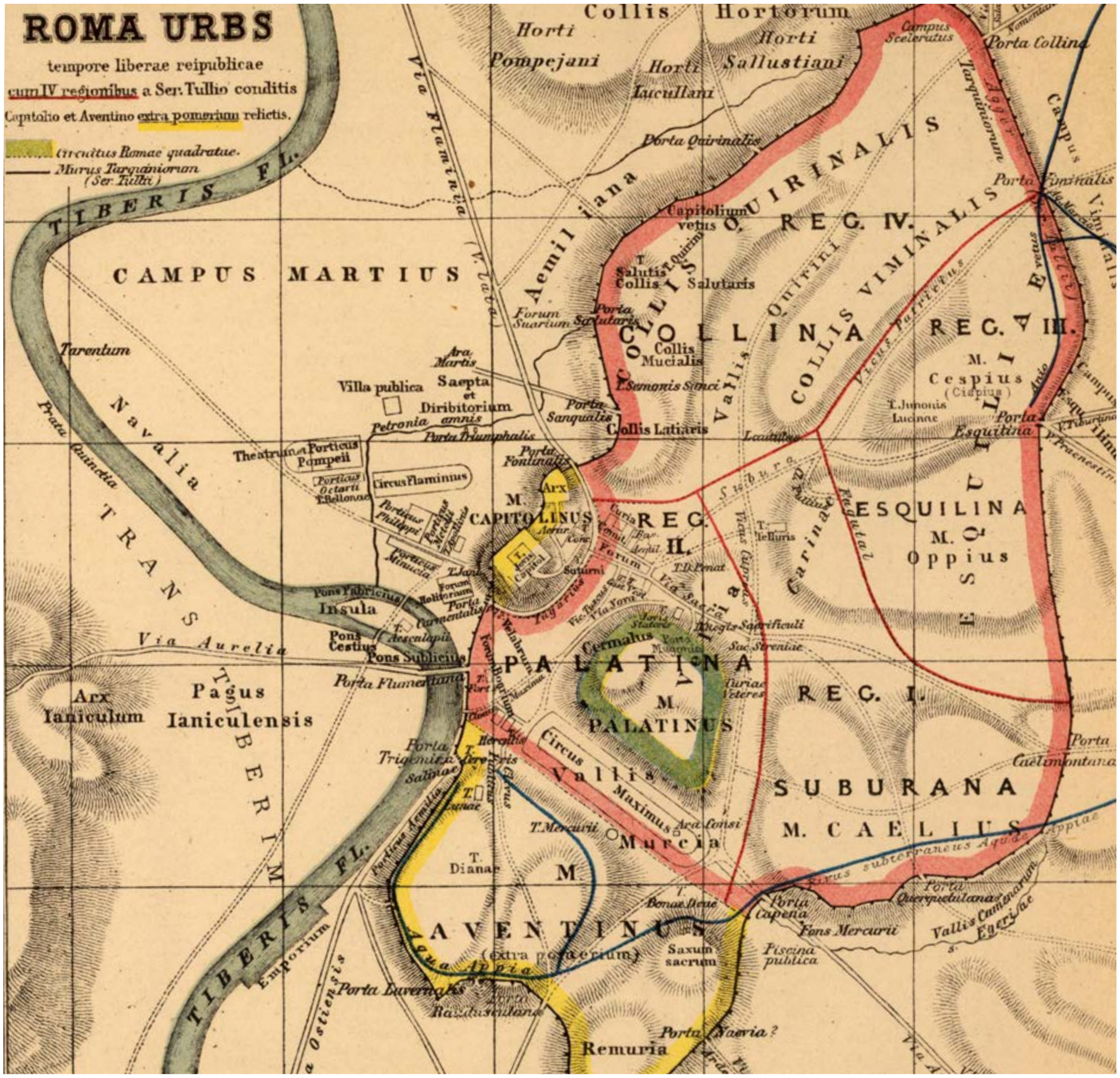

ROMA URBS
tempore liberae reipublicae cum IV regionibus a Ser. Tullio conditis Capitolio et Aventino extra pomerium relictis.
Circuitus Romae quadratae.
Murus Tarquiniorum (Ser. Tullii)
TIBERIS FL.
CAMPUS MARTIUS
Via Flaminia
Collis Hortorum
Horti Pompejani
Horti Luculliani
Horti Sallustiani
Porta Collina
Porta Quirinalis
QUIRINALIS
REG. IV.
COLLIS VIMINALIS
COLLINA
REG. III.
ESQUILINA
M. Cespius
M. Oppius
Porta Esquilina
M. CAPITOLINUS
REG. II.
PALATINA
M. PALATINUS
REG. I.
SUBURANA
M. CAELIUS
Circus Maximus
M. AVENTINUS (extra pomerium)
Insula
Pons Sublicius
Porta Flumentana
Arx Ianiculum
Pagus Ianiculensis
TRANS TIBERIM
Navalia
Tarentum
Villa publica
Saepta et Diribitorium
Circus Flaminius
Theatrum et Porticus Pompeii
Via Aurelia
Porta Capena
Porta Trigemina
Emporium
Aqua Appia
Remuria
Porta Naevia?
Via Ostiensis

Fig. 15

Kiepert, *Roma urbs*, detail showing *Roma Quadrata* in green, the Servian Wall in pink, and the Capitoline and Aventine Hills in yellow

hypothetically connecting the known ruins of the Servian Wall, completing the circuit.

Servian Rome is shown further carved up into the four administrative *regiones* (or quarters) of the republican period, as indicated by thin red lines. Next to the Servian Wall, the Capitoline and Aventine Hills are marked in yellow to indicate their status as part of the *pomerium*, a buffer zone running around the city wall that marked Rome's religious and territorial boundary.

The map at lower left jumps ahead by several hundred years to give a detailed view of the Roman and Imperial Fora: the zones of daily life, government, and commerce. Just to the south are the palaces of the Palatine; to the west, the temples of the Capitoline: center of the city's religious life. The third map, taking up the top half of the image, shows an ever larger Rome divided into the fourteen administrative regions of Augustus and encircled by the Aurelian Wall. Here, too, the map freely mixes physical and metaphysical borders to give a picture of the steady accumulations that began to jostle for space on the city's topography.

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